



EZEQUIEL VIÑAO
LA NOCHE DE LAS NOCHES

According to the book of the Thousand and One Nights, Gabriel was sent down from Heaven with the Preserved Tablet for the revelation of the Apostle. This became known as the *Laylat al-Qadr*, the Night of Power, which “is better than a thousand months,” or, in Spanish, **La Noche de las Noches**. *Zenga* is a Japanese word for water inks where figures are reduced to a minimal outline. Performed in one stroke, they represent a fusion of intellect and intuition. The seven musical *Zenga* in this collection originate from simple sound-objects that do not really develop in the conventional sense of the word, but rather unfold into moods or visions. The basic materials are the same for all *Zenga*, only we hear them from different perspectives. The first movement is a short prelude or introduction; the second, a two-voice study in “note against note” counterpoint, an early music technique also known as *punctum contra punctum*. In the third *Zenga* we encounter the first complete presentation of the main harmonic field of the piece, and its corresponding rhythmic structure, a North Indian cycle or *tala*. The fourth movement reveals a collection of rhythms borrowed from classical Greek prosody coming together in a five voice texture. The first violin plays the main line, or *cantus firmus*, and the viola, the first counterpoint. Half way through, we hear two new voices, a canon, in the electronics, followed by the last counterpoint, in the second violin. The fifth *Zenga* is a palindrome where Greek meters (bells) and North Indian cycles (drums, strings pizzicato) combine to form three distinct events. The sixth is the longest number of the set, a passacaglia-like structure where an illusion of movement is created by means of “oblique” polyphony. Each instrument circles around a motive that remains specific to a part. What varies is the vertical relationship between the voices as well as the individual dynamic inflexions. In the last *Zenga*, harmony becomes melody, a simple horizontal expression of *La Noche de las Noches*’ complex musical space.

Argentinian-American composer **Ezequiel Viñao** has been described by the members of the Juilliard String Quartet as a “particularly personal and intimate musical voice,” one that “combines an encyclopedic musical knowledge with an eclectic compositional philosophy.” Viñao’s work is often spoken of in relation to the diverse sources that shape it, and, in particular, his dramatic use of rhythm. After the premiere of ‘Sirocco Dust’, a string quartet commissioned by the Library of Congress and Stanford Lively Arts, The Washington Post remarked how “cheers and whistles resounded through the Auditorium -the groove and texture were almost electric- the composer received vociferous applause.” But his music also draws on medieval sources, especially Old Spanish chant, to create melodic contours that unfold quite slowly into vast harmonic fields. His ‘Arcanum’, for example, was described by Le Monde de la Musique as a work “of great contemplative beauty.” And there is also a practice Viñao calls “reinterpretation,” which could be understood as the re-contextualization of past narratives (or disciplines.) We find aspects of this technique as far back as in ‘El Sueño de Cristobal’, an early orchestral score revised in 2010 for the re-inauguration of Teatro Colon in Buenos Aires (Clarín -the largest newspaper in the Hispanic world- found the work “masterful.”)

Viñao has worked with a wide range of presenters: the list includes Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center and City Opera in New York; the Almeida Theatre in London; the Musikverein in Vienna; the Kennedy Center in Washington; the Bourges Festival in France; the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam; the Helsinki Biennale; the Tanglewood, Ravinia and Aspen Music Festivals; The Tramway in Glasgow; Stuttgart's Liederhalle in Germany, and the Shobi Institute in Tokyo. He has collaborated with musicians as varied as Dennis Russell Davies, Paul Hillier, Kristjan Jarvi, Anne Akiko Meyers, Joseph Kalichstein and Cristina Pato; with ensembles such as Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France; American Composers Orchestra; Buenos Aires Philharmonic; Absolute Ensemble and Lincoln Center's Chamber Music Society; as well as with the Juilliard, St. Lawrence and Brentano String Quartets. Viñao has also received significant institutional recognition: a Friedheim Award from the Kennedy Center; a First Prize from UNESCO's Latin-American Rostrum of Composers; five ISCM First Prizes (International Society for Contemporary Music); an Endowed Fellowship from California's Djerassi Foundation, and awards from the Argentinean Academy of Fine Arts, the International Music Council in Paris, the San Antonio Festival, and the New York Foundation for the Arts. Major commissions include 'Viviane of Avalon' for voice and orchestra (Presences Festival, Paris); 'Saga', for piano, violin and chamber ensemble (Miller Theatre, New York); 'The Loss and the Silence' a string quartet written for the Juilliard School's Centennial; 'The Wanderer', a choral setting of a tenth century Anglo-Saxon text (Chanticleer - Chicago A Cappella); 'Beowulf: Scyld's Burial' for voices and percussion (National Chamber Choir of Ireland - Cork Music Festival), and 'Sonetos de Amor', a multimedia show based on the poetry of Pablo Neruda (Jebediah Foundation - Lincoln Center, New York.)

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VIÑAO, EZEQUIEL (b.1960)
“La Noche de las Noches” seven Zenga
for string quartet and electronics (1987-89)

1. Zenga I (♩ = 188) 1'18
 2. Zenga II (♩ = 112) 1'46
 3. Zenga III (♩ = ♩) 2'25
 4. Zenga IV (*Presto con fuoco*) 1'47
 5. Zenga V (♩ = 188) 2'07
 6. Zenga VI (♩ = 98) 5'52
 7. Zenga VII (*Infinitamente lento*) 2'58
- TT : 18'13

SPECULUM MUSICAE

DON PALMA, conductor
Ben Hudson & Carol Zeavin, violins
Maureen Gallagher, viola
Eric Bartlett, cello
Ken Bookstein & Ezequiel Viñao, electronics

Recorded at RPM Studios, New York City 5/90
Recording Engineer: Frank Pecok
Producer: Ezequiel Viñao